



ALBUQUERQUE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alex Romero, Chair
Jeanette Baca
Samuel K. Collins
Aaron Forrester

COMMISSION MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Archie Garcia

CITY STAFF PRESENT:

Gabriel Rivera, MRA
Cynthia Borrego – MRA
Ralph Mims – MRA
Yolanda Aragon - MRA

OTHERS PRESENT:

John Daugherty, El Sueno Communities
Tom Liggett, Integrated Automotive
Martha Henderson, Rental Property
David Orwat, Property Owner
Roger Mickelson, East Gateway Coalition
Mike Davidson, Resident of Singing Arrow
Michael Brasher, Neighborhood Watch
Rose Sena, Singing Arrow Neighborhood
Jim Alsup, East Gateway Coalition

Minutes of August 8, 2007

1) Call to Order:

Commissioner Romero called the meeting to order at 3:05pm.

2) Changes and/or Additions to the Agenda:

Commissioner Romero asked if there were any changes and/or additions to the Agenda.

There were none.

3) Approval of Minutes:

Commissioner Romero mentioned that the minutes of the July 18, 2007 were not binding and were for informational purposes only.

4) Announcements:

There were none.

5) Public Comments:

There were none

6) ADC #07-05 East Gateway MRA Designation – Gabe Rivera

Mr. Rivera, Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency: He gave a brief explanation as to what Metropolitan Redevelopment Areas (MRAs) are. There are fourteen different areas throughout the City, and they deal mostly with capital improvement projects that address economic development, safety issues, as well as environmental health issues. He stated that there have been two public meetings, as well as two community meetings with the Neighborhood Association Presidents in the East Gateway Metropolitan Redevelopment Area to receive public comments, which are included in the Commissioners' packets today.

Right now there are about 659 acres included in the MRA with 33 acres that are vacant lots. There are also many vacant buildings in the area, many signs of vandalism and there are also some safety concerns. He stated that they want to focus on the old Furrs building on the corner of Juan Tabo and Central. He mentioned the crime statistics in the area, which were of concern, such as vandalism, destruction and damage or property and prostitution.

The staff of the Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency recommends that the East Gateway Metropolitan Redevelopment Area designation report be approved as submitted and it be forwarded to the Mayor and the City Council with a do pass recommendation.

Commissioner Romero asked if there were any questions or comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Forrester asked if the boundaries of the MRA were still the same.

Commissioner Romero stated that they were the same.

Commissioner Collins asked if when an area is designated as blighted does that typically hurt or increase property values.

Mr. Rivera explained that property values are based on the property sales in the surrounding area, as well as what the improvements on the structure have been. He explained that it is also beneficial to a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area because the City, State, and Federal agencies can focus resources on a certain area.

Commissioner Collins asked exactly what the City would do, would they provide funds to acquire properties, redevelop properties, or what they are being asked to approve.

Mr. Rivera explained that they would begin the planning process and they would focus mainly on making improvements on the corner of Juan Tabo and Central and then hopefully it would spread east towards Tramway as well as fill in with improvements towards Eubank.

Commissioner Romero explained that they would be approving the designation of an MR Plan right now, so that a contract could be initiated, which would designate key areas to focus on.

Commissioner Baca asked if there was going to be a Sector Plan done also.

Cynthia Borrego, Manager, Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency: She stated that there would be.

Commissioner Romero stated that he found from all the input letters and e-mails that were attached in the packet, 1 in favor, 8 against it, 3 not sure and 1 he could not tell one way or the other, so that tells him something that he did not read in the background summary. He also saw that many of the people in the area were saying “It’s OK for everybody else, but not for me”. He wanted to know what the City did to address those issues that were raised in those e-mails and letters.

Mr. Rivera explained that the main issue was the size and focus of the area, so they changed the boundaries. There was also a lot of confusion regarding the building guidelines and the Sector Plan.

Commissioner Romero wanted to know how it was addressed for the people that said “not me”. Were the e-mails prior to the re-sizing of the area?

Mr. Rivera explained that the letters and e-mails were prior to the re-sizing.

Commissioner Romero stated that another thing that was unclear to him and a concern was that they have what was presented to them today, but on the other side there is a lot of positive new activity in the area such as a new Home Depot and Walgreens, so one could argue that the area is not all deteriorating and blighted.

Mr. Rivera stated that they tried to address that issue in the meetings that were held with the neighborhoods. He stated that the newest construction is all pre-impact fee related, where as now impact fees are affecting the entire City of Albuquerque. Another thing that is significant is the Savings & Loan crisis, because now more than ever, you are going to need public/private partnerships, because it is very difficult to get loans right now.

Commissioner Romero stated that what he looks for in a recommendation in a Staff Report is a solid recommendation based on specific findings. He felt that the report was rather tentative and he did not see a lot of passion to move forward on the initiative. He felt that the report had many mixed messages and if they were going to have a recommendation that it was supported by factual information with plenty of input from the community.

Cynthia Borrego stated that one of the things that the MRA office typically does is initiate the designation for an area, however, in this case, they were given a Resolution by the City Council to designate the area, so they were looking for information that would assist them in doing the designation. The other problem is that the community has been somewhat mixed and it has been an uphill battle to come up with that information.

Commissioner Romero stated that regardless of how the designation was initiated, this Commission will do its job in going through the process. The Commission needs to do their job regardless of how it got there.

Commissioner Forrester asked if the maps handed out were the same, as far as the boundaries go.

Mr. Rivera stated that they had to keep going back to Council to update the boundaries after the community meetings, however, the City Council kept creating maps that did not match what the Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency maps looked like, creating more confusion.

Commissioner Forrester asked if ultimately the MRA map's boundaries are the result of the community meetings and their input.

Mr. Rivera stated that that was correct.

Commissioner Romero asked that the interested parties come forward and speak either for or against the designation.

John Daugherty, El Sueno Communities: Mr. Daugherty stated that he attended the meetings and stated that he is for progress in the area, although the process has been confusing as to the benefits of declaring the area an MRA.

Tom Liggett, Integrated Communities: He stated that there are several very large parcels of land where mobile homes are being sold, so that makes it hard to change them into something else. He thinks that it is up to zoning to come in and get rid of the weeds and take the old signs down, but he does not think it requires an MRA designation for the area. Ever since the word blighted came up, he can't get the Solid Waste Dept. to come out and pick up trash, he can't get anything done about the weeds, or get a traffic signal put on the corner of Central and Elizabeth. He is against the designation at this time.

Martha Henderson, 315 Juan Tabo NE: Nothing to say.

David Orwat, Property Owner: Nothing to say.

Roger Mickelson, President of East Gateway Coalition: He stated that they have studied this problem for about 2 years and he finds that the legislation is complex, confusing and complicated. He feels like they have been pressured to do the MRA and he is not sure why. He said that his e-mail to Cynthia Borrego stated that he had forwarded their comments to his Councilor, who did not see fit to forward his e-mail to the Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency

staff. He recommended that the Sector Plan be done first to evaluate a wider area and to more fully understand how to improve the area. The second recommendation was to defer the MRA, but have it include only commercial properties near Central Ave, and the third recommendation was to eliminate the interim restrictive design regulations. He thinks the Sector Plan should be done first and that there are other alternatives, such as Industrial Revenue Bonds, waiving impact fees, etc. to bring new developers and business to the area. He feels the MRA can be a useful tool, but only after they finish the Sector Plan and identify two or three key areas. He recommended a do not pass on the MRA.

Commissioner Romero asked Cynthia Borrego why there were different maps for the MRA.

Ms. Borrego stated that there were different maps because City Council posted a different map on the web than the Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency and the MRA map was revised as a result of the community meetings that they held.

Commissioner Romero was wondering why many of these issues had not been resolved already and why there was so much confusion still.

Ms. Borrego stated that this area has been very controversial, not only with the MRA, but with the process that was used, which is not typical of other Metropolitan Redevelopment Areas.

Isaac Padilla, Councilor Harris' Assistant: The original area was cut back due to the constituents' concerns. He explained that there are big box businesses on Eubank to capture the traffic going into the Base. He explained that the MRA and the Sector Plan would be very beneficial to the area.

Commissioner Romero stated that he understood all of that, but what he was wondering was why they were having this type of discussion at this meeting, when it should have already been done with the community.

Mr. Padilla agreed that this has been a difficult process and he has only worked with the Council for a short time, but he has met with the different neighborhood associations.

Commissioner Romero stated that he has chaired this Commission for the last 15 years and he has seen when there is good communication with the community, and when there is poor communication. He said that poor community involvement creates fear, uncertainty and people don't feel like they are being heard or part of the process.

Mr. Padilla stated that they are trying to have better communication and have Councilor Harris attend the community meetings and get the community more involved so that they can understand the process, and the Plan will reflect what the community wants.

Mike Davidson, Singing Arrow Neighborhood: He wants what is best for the neighborhood, however, he does not want to be dictated by someone outside the neighborhood telling him what is best. He is now familiar with what a Sector Plan does and he is against the proposal as it stands now, but perhaps it could be a valuable tool down the road.

Michael Brasher, Neighborhood Watch: He stated that the community received a letter stating that “I have taken the initiative....” which shows that this is coming from an individual (Councilor Harris) and not the community, which is the problem. He stated that Cynthia Borrego and her staff have done an excellent job. He also stated that there was a meeting held by the Singing Arrow Neighborhood Association and the East Gateway Coalition but nobody from the City or the City Council showed up. He stated that most of the problems in the area can be taken care of on their own. He supports the Sector Plan and the planning process and he thinks they need to take a good look at the area, but he is opposed to the MRA.

Rose Sena, Singing Arrow Neighborhood Association President: She feels like they have not been heard. They are totally opposed to the MRA and thinks they should do the Sector Plan first.

Jim Alsup, East Gateway Coalition: He wants the Sector Plan to determine what needs to be done in the area first.

Suheil Kare: Nothing to say.

Harmin Sian: Nothing to say.

Joel Jurkins, Octopus Car Wash: He has a problem with the current moratorium and is trying to figure out what is going to happen in the area, because he is in negotiations to buy the southeast corner of Juan Tabo and Central.

Cynthia Borrego explained that the resolutions that were introduced by City Council recommended three things and they were the development of a Sector Plan, the development of a Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan and interim design guidelines. She explained that each plan has certain tasks and they each have a different focus. The MR Plan is the only tool that allows for redevelopment bonds, tax increment financing, and public/private partnerships for the redevelopment of an area.

Cheryl Curan, Property Owner: She explained that they were going to add on to their body shop located on the corner of Shirley and Central, but with the moratorium they can’t do that now.

Commissioner Romero made a motion to defer any action for 90 days in order to work out any conflicts and address any issues that the community may still have.

Commissioner Baca seconded the motion.

Commissioner Collins asked if the building moratorium would still be in effect during the 90 day deferral.

Ms. Borrego explained that the interim design guidelines fall under the Zoning Division’s responsibility and not a part of her office, however they will continue to work with them and make suggestions.

Commissioner Romero suggested to Mr. Padilla that Councilor Harris should be part of the interim design guidelines discussions to address the issues.

Commissioner Baca explained that she lives in a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area and sometimes people are afraid of the word “blighted” because they think that their property values will go down, but it can actually be a helpful tool.

Jeff Jesionowski, Chair, Environmental Planning Commission: He stated that the biggest problem today was the confusion between a Sector Plan and an MRA. There are many benefits in being in an MRA which haven’t been explained today.

Commissioner Romero said that the most important thing is about ownership and ownership should not be with the City, but with the community.

Commissioner Romero made a motion to defer the MRA designation for 90 days.

The motion carried unanimously.

7) Old Business:

There was none.

8) New Business:

There was none.

9) Adjourn:

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30pm.